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ABSTRACT

Play is essential to children's healthy development and learning, and toys are the tools of children's play. Noting that parents are constantly faced with decisions about what toys to buy and what toys to avoid, this guide is intended to help parents promote their children's creative and constructive play by making informed choices about toys, and by working with other adults at home, school, and in the community to promote positive play and toys. Sections of the guide delineate: what parents and other adults can do; choosing toys of value; toys and toy trends to avoid; making shoe box gifts for hours of creative play; and media violence and children. This media violence section includes an action guide with guidelines and resources. (HTH)



TRUCE

2000-2001

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Toy Action Guide

Play is essential to children's healthy development and learning. Children use play to actively construct knowledge and acquire life skills. The content of their play comes from their own experiences. Changes in today's childhood are undermining play. Because of the pervasive influence of the electronic media – such as TV, movies, videos, computer – children spend more time sitting in front of a screen and less time playing creatively with each other.

Toys are the tools of children's play. Toys influence play. Toys of value enhance children's natural ability to engage in imaginative, meaningful play by allowing them to bring their own ideas and solve their own problems. Many of the toys on the market today are highly structured and linked to TV and videos. These toys channel children into imitative play, robbing them of their own imagination, problem solving, and creativity.

Parents are constantly faced with decisions about what toys to buy and what toys to avoid. Peers, ads, and link-ups between products and the media pressure parents and children to buy every new toy from TV or movies, instead of making thoughtful decisions about which toys promote the healthiest play. This guide is intended to help parents promote their children's creative and constructive play by making informed choices about toys, and by working with other adults at home, school, and in the community to promote positive play and toys.



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What Parents & Other Adults Can Do

In 1984, the Federal Communications Commission deregulated children's television. This made it legal to sell toys through TV programs. Since deregulation, most best selling toys have been linked to children's TV shows and other electronic media, many of which promote violence, sexiness, and buying more and more. Deregulation has made choosing toys and creating a healthy play environment harder for adults. Dealing with this challenge provides an opportunity to build communication and share values with children in a meaningful way. It also offers adults a chance to work together with schools and the community to create healthy play options for children.

parents & children

- Provide interesting activities, materials, field trips to encourage positive interests, hobbies.
- Define your values about violence and share them with your children.
- Shop at toy stores that consciously don't sell toys of violence or toys that undermine healthy play.
- Take action— write a letter to a toy company or store. (see below)
- Plan toy purchases together and limit impulse buying and overstimulating trips to toy stores.
- Provide uninterrupted daily playtime and organize play materials so they are easily accessible.
- Work together to make thoughtful decisions about the role of media in the home.

parents & other parents

- Support each others' efforts to reduce children's exposure to TV shows and movies that are used to market toys, especially violent toys.
- Support each others' efforts to avoid buying toys of violence or items with logos related to movies, TV shows, restaurants, etc.
- Share resources for activities, good toys and books, ideas for birthday gifts, events and outings with other families.
- Share strategies and ideas for alternatives to TV, especially at difficult times of day.

parents & teachers

- Provide information for parents on the importance of play and how toys and media affect it.
- Help parents find effective ways to promote healthy play and limit their children's involvement with TV, movies, videos, computer.

- Work together to develop school policies that promote healthy play (e.g., ample free play).
- Start a home lending book and tape program to provide positive leisure-time play options.

parents & community

- Create coalitions among existing community groups who support healthy play environments for children, plan a community forum on this issue.
- Organize efforts to voice concerns about harmful toys being marketed or advertised to children in your community (e.g., complain at stores, write letters to newspapers).
- Plan a violent toy trade-in, good toy and book fair or swap. Involve older children in your efforts.

Dear [Toy Company President/Toy Store Manager]:

I recently shopped at _____.
I found [toy] harmful to children because of
the lessons it teaches about violence.

As a [parent/guardian], I am deeply concerned
about the escalating violence in our country
and the role [your product] may play in pro-
moting it. I will tell at least ten others about
my concerns with [your product] and urge
them to protect their children from it.

I hope you share my concerns about violence
and children. I urge you to play your role in
helping to reduce the epidemic of violence in
homes, schools, and communities by refusing
to sell toys of violence.

Sincerely yours,



2000-2001

Choosing Toys of Value

All toys listed are suitable for girls and boys. Age guidelines represent youngest age for safety and appropriateness. However, we have selected toys that children can use throughout their early years.

Toys have enhanced play value when they . . .

- Can be used in many ways.
- Allow children to determine the play.
- Appeal to children at more than one age or level of development.
- Are not linked to video games, TV or movies.
- Can be used with other toys for new and more complex play.
- Will stand the test of time and continue to be part of play as develop new interests and skills.
- Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions among children.
- Help children develop skills important for further learning and a sense of mastery.

Choose toys that promote . . .

➤ **Dramatic Play.** Helps children work out their own ideas about their experiences. Provides a powerful way of learning new skills and a sense of mastery. Examples: blocks, toys vehicles- cars, trucks, planes boats; dress up clothes, small animals, dolls, stuffed animals, puppets, props to recreate real life (post office, restaurant, store), materials for creating small worlds like doll houses, castles.

• **Brio Tractor Trailer with Bulldozer (Brio)**

Ages: 18 months & up

\$25

Two trucks for sand and dramatic play.

• **Groovy Girls & Groovy Boys (Manhattan Toys)**

Ages: 18 months & up

\$10-\$20

Brightly dressed, multicultural fabric dolls in a variety of sizes.

➤ **Manipulative Play with Small Play Objects.** Develops small muscle control and eye-hand coordination. Teaches about relationships between objects, essential for understanding math and science. Examples: construction sets and toys with interlocking pieces (Legos, Lincoln Logs), puzzles, pegboards, miniature models, parquetry blocks.

• **Brio Builder System (Brio)**

Ages: 3 & up

Endless Building Possibilities is a great starter set with realistic tools and wooden and plastic building pieces.

\$40

Toolbox has more tools and additional building materials, in plastic carry case.

\$30

In addition, there are a variety of more representational construction-kits for older children (fire station, construction vehicles, race cars, etc.)

Ages: 5-8 years

Varying prices

• **Jigsaws in a Box (Lights, Camera, Interaction! Inc.)**

Ages: 3-6

\$10-\$15

Box containing 4 small wooden puzzles, each w/ 12-24 pieces. Each set is based on a theme (vehicles, animals, dinosaurs, etc.)

• **Wiggly Giggly Collection (HandsOnToys, Inc.)**

Ages: 3 months - 5 years

\$2-\$10

A variety of balls and stackable rattles that shake, rattle and roll to create amusing sounds and visually interesting effects.

Support independent, specialty toy stores, that have made a commitment to high quality, non-violent toys.

➤ **Creative Arts.** Encourages self-expression and the using of symbols, a vital skill for problem solving and literacy. Examples: poster and finger paints, assortment of blank paper of all sizes and colors, crayons and markers, scissors, glue, recycled materials, stamps, clay, weaving kits.

• **Nature Patterns Blocks (T.C. Timber)** Ages: 3 & up \$25
Wooden pattern blocks in a variety of geometric shapes that are found in the natural world (i.e. hexagonal shape, beehive).

• **Kaleida Jewels (Global Toys, Inc.)** Ages: 3 & up \$16
144 colorful, sparkly holographic magnets in 6 shapes for creating patterns and pictures. Comes with a 10"x10" double-sided travel magnet board.

• **Clay Faces (Alex)** Ages: 4 & up \$15
Clay Modeling Activity Kit comes w/ 2 lbs of clay in 10 colors, 25 cutters, sculpting tool and rolling pin.

➤ **Physical Play.** Promotes healthy body awareness and coordination and helps let off steam. Opportunities for social interaction. Examples: bikes, scooters and other wheel toys, balls, bats, jump ropes, space trolleys, pogo sticks, giant chalk, swing sets, climbing structures, play tunnels.

• **Gripper Bowling Set (Saturnian Inc.)** Ages: 18 months & up \$30
Colorful, soft numbered pins w/ soft "gripper" ball. Appropriate for a wide range of ages, and for indoor / outdoor play.

• **Dart Ball (P.T.S., Inc.)** Ages: 4 & up \$22
Balls and large inflatable target with Velcro sticking action.

• **Colorful Balls (TC Timber)** Ages: 9 months & up \$6-\$8
Durable plastic in bright colors and designs—lady bugs, farm animals, etc.

➤ **Game Playing.** Teaches about taking turns, planning strategy, sequencing, rules, and cooperation. Examples: board games like checkers and chess, card games, jacks.

• **Hand in Hand/Pillow Pincher/Variland (Selecta Spielzeug)** Ages: 3 & up \$25-\$29
Wooden matching and sorting games with appealing, multi-cultural images of children.

• **Walk in the Woods (Family Pastimes)** Ages: 3-7 \$14
Board game. Enjoy a walk in the woods—look at beautiful butterflies, pick apples, avoid poison ivy, solve problems together.

Remember the Classics!

- table blocks • ocean, farm, and rainforest animals or insects
- construction sets (Legos, Lincoln Logs, etc.) • people and animal props • tool sets • flashlights • dolls with accurate features • clay • basic art supplies • blocks • cars, trucks, boats, planes and trains • dress-up clothes and house-wares
- bean bags • balls • jump ropes • playing cards • puzzles • tape stories • medical kits • musical instruments •

➤ Things You Can Do For Free ◀

Reading Books. Provides exciting content to use in play and an essential foundation for literacy. Children enjoy telling, acting out and drawing their own stories. Visit your local library. Select books with meaningful stories and characters and positive values.

Play with Natural Materials. Using sand, water, mud, rocks, shells and leaves cultivates a love of nature and the environment. Extend play with buckets and shovels, bubble blowers, watering cans, plastic tubing, cardboard boxes for collecting and sorting, magnifying glasses, flashlight, butterfly net, balance scales.

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Toys and Toy Trends to Avoid

We have chosen toys which dramatically illustrate the harmful toy trends. Some toys could fit into more than one category.

Toys have limited play value when they . . .

- Can only be used in one way.
- Encourage everyone to play the same way as determined by the toy designer.
- Appeal primarily to a single age or level of development.
- Will probably sit on a shelf after the first "fun" half hour.
- Will channel children into imitating scripts they see on TV or movies screens.
- Do special high tech actions for the child instead of encouraging the child's exploration and mastery.
- Lure children into watching the TV program or other media linked to the toy.
- Promote violence and stereotypes, which can lead to disrespectful and aggressive behavior.

Try to avoid toys that . . .

➤ **Make Electronic Technology the Focus of Play.** Many billed as educational, but most control and limit play, leading to "smart" toys, not "smart" children. Examples: dolls, stuffed animals, phones and books that talk when a button is pushed.

• **Electronic Hand-Held Video Games (Milton Bradley).** Ages: 3 & up \$20
These include games such as Candyland and Mr. Potato Head. A new twist on an old favorite. Traditional toys and board games become computerized leading to solitary play.

• **Soft and Smart Puppy Phone (Knowledge Kids Enterprises)** Ages: 9 months & up \$10
A cross between a stuffed toy dog and a phone promising to teach language and reasoning skills and "creativity".

➤ **Hook Infants & Toddlers on TV, Computers, and Other Media.** Young children need to interact directly with people and materials and experience their direct effect on the immediate environment., not watch toys play for them. Examples: talking play computers that say the alphabet, colors or numbers.

• **Little Smart Storytime Rhymes – Leap Frog (V-Tech)** Ages: 6 months & up \$13
Computerized books that undermine literacy by teaching young children to expect books to entertain them. Small fingers "press arrow buttons and bring nursery rhymes to life!"

• **Little People Animal Sounds Farm (Fisher Price)** Ages: 1 1/2 & up \$30
Classic little people farm with the addition of new technology which makes animal sounds. A video tells children how to play.

➤ **Lure Young Girls Into Pretending to Be Teenagers.** Promote stereotyped and sexualized behaviors — focus on appearance and bodies; equate self worth with beauty and appearance. Examples: Dolls based on real teenage stars and pop music; "pretend" make-up, tattoos, body piercing, jewelry.

• **Make-Up Mindy (HASBRO)** Ages: 3 & up \$20
A doll that comes with beauty mask, nail polish, and make-up, encouraging girls to "make her pretty over and over" again.

• **Superhero Buttercup: The Powerpuff Girls (Cartoon Network)** Ages: 18 months & up \$15
Small plush doll with "Laser-blast eyes". When you push her tummy, she makes shooting sounds and says, "Smash! Smash! Right in the kisser" and "I think they are asking for a hiney whooping!"

➤ **Emphasize Violent, Grotesque and Sexual Images.** Adds to an unhealthy focus on anti-social play that undermines the lessons caring adults teach. Examples: Action figures of male and female professional wrestlers, science fiction or horror TV programs or movies.

• **WWF Buried Alive (JAKKS Pacific)** Ages: 4 & up \$10
Four action figures based on real-life wrestlers seen on TV, a burial mound with a pop-up casket, a casket with a removable lid, and a break-away tombstone.

- **Nerf Series Including Bungee Blaster and Double Crossbow** Ages: 6 & up \$10
Toys that claim to be safe (because they are made of soft, foam like materials) while encouraging dangerous play "Fire 2 missiles at once" or launch projectiles for "super cool fun".

➤ **Are Linked to Commercial Products and Advertisements.** Turn play into ads for products and ensure an early and easy market for brand-names. Examples: toys with the logos of fast food restaurants, chain stores, and junk food products.

- **Playdoh Fast Food Kits: Taco Bell and Chicken McNuggets Happy Meal Playshop (HASBRO)** Ages: 3 & up \$10
Children make the same junk foods they see on TV ads. The McDonalds Playshop comes with a coupon for a free Happy Meal.

- **Baby Lego-Disney's Baby Mickey (Primo)** Ages: 6-24 months \$15
Baby Mickey dressed in blue and Baby Minnie dressed in pink lure young children into the corporate world of Disney.

➤ **Take the Creative Play Out of Classic Toys.** Dictate what and how to play and undermine creativity and learning. Examples: Balls made to look like bombs, play-dough with molds to make items in only one way, construction toys with directions to build only one way.

- **Easy Bake Kitchen with CD Rom Play Set (Interactive)** Ages: 3 & up \$3
A simulated cooking experience that promises "No waiting, no mess" and "Instant fun for the littlest bakers" as children place the "bake set" on their computers and follow directions on the CD.

- **WWF Attitude Bears-Al Snow and other WWF figures (TITAN Sports)** No Age \$13
Small stuffed teddy bear holding the severed head of a little bear. Comes with trading card of the wrestler Al Snow who is holding the severed head of a woman.

➤ **Are Linked to TV Programs, Movies and Video Games Rated for Teens or Adults.**

Expose children to inappropriate content not designed for them. Examples: Action figures, dolls and other products linked to PG-13 or R-rated movies or TV-14 programs.

- **X-Men Action Figures: Storm (Halle Berry) and Mystique (Rebecca Romijn-Stamos)** Ages: 5 & up \$6
6" Scantily clad action figures representing the primary heroines of this rated PG-13 movie.

- **Dragon Ball Z Super Glove(MGA Entertainment)** Ages: 5 & up \$10
From the Cartoon Network. A glove that turns your body into a weapon with "fireball hurdling sound effects" and "light burning from the finger tips".

➤ **Link Play to Candy and Unhealthy Foods.**

Encourages poor nutrition; condition children to expect a treat as part of play. Examples: Miniature boxes of sugar cereals and other snack foods, toys linked to fast food restaurants, candy necklaces, motorized lollipops, plastic animals with candy body parts.

- **Kellogg's Fruit Loops! Counting Fun Book (Barbara Barbier McGrath)** Ages: Infants & Up \$6
Cover looks like cereal box. Count out fruit loops by putting them into holes in the book. Also: *The M&M's Brand Chocolate Candies Counting Board Book* (Charlesbridge) and *The Hershey Kisses Counting Board Book* (Corporate Board Books).

- **Fisher Price Games-Oreo Matchin' Middles** Ages: 3 & up \$7
Players reach into cookie jar; find matching half of an Oreo cookie. The box promises "24 OREO cookie halves" to future consumers.

**A Letter About Fighting Toys:
for Children & Adults to Talk About Together**

Some kids really love toy guns and toys with weapons on them. They have fun pretending to fight with them. A lot of teachers worry about weapon toys. They think that if kids play with these toys and pretend to fight and kill, it will teach kids that it's okay to hurt people and that fighting and hurting is fun. Kids often say, "We're only pretending. We're just 'playing'."

Some teachers say kids in their classes pretend to be characters on TV. Kids act out kicking and fighting. Then kids often really do hurt each other. It gets scary. It isn't pretend, teachers say.

Many teachers are worried. They are angry that TV shows and ads make violent toys look cool so kids want to buy them. They say companies shouldn't be allowed to sell violent toys to kids on TV.

Teachers hope this letter will help families talk together about the toys they buy and make thoughtful choices.

- What do you think about what the teachers say?
- What do you think teachers, parents and children should do about fighting toys?
- What can grown-ups do to help children be safe and learn not to fight?
- What ideas do you have about how children can play without fighting toys?

Thanks, From Many Teachers All Over the Country

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Shoe Box Gifts for hours of creative play

Usually, giving gifts to children means buying manufactured toys at a store. Here is an alternative gift idea that you can easily put together. Shoe box gifts are collections of small, familiar items that are organized around a play theme and presented in an appealing way. They also show that expensive toys in fancy packages aren't necessarily the best. The process of putting together such an easy, yet imaginative and age-appropriate gift for a special child in your life can be very satisfying for you, too.

Making Shoe Box Gifts

- Decorate an empty shoe box and lid (gift wrap, stickers, etc.).
- Choose a theme and put a clear label on the box which includes both a simple word and picture of the theme.
- Most of the items we suggest are found at hardware stores, pharmacies, stationary stores, and art/crafts stores, supermarkets.
- Use small containers, zip-lock sandwich bags, or building dividers with small pieces of cardboard to make "compartments" for the various items in the shoe box. Young children appreciate organization-being able to return everything to its "place."
- Most of these suggestions are appropriate and safe for children to use independently; however, objects in some kits may require adult supervision and/or aid (e.g., food coloring).

Shoe Box Gift Theme Ideas: Use these or create your own

BABY BOX (to be used with a baby doll or stuffed animal)	RESCUE/FIRST AID	OFFICE	PLAY DOUGH
• newborn disposable diapers • empty plastic baby food jars • baby-size spoon • plastic baby bottle • infant clothes & blanket • small wash cloth • pacifier & rattle • bib	• flashlight • bandaids • ace bandage • sling • eye patch • gauze • stethoscope • surgical mask	• stapler (4 or 5 yrs. & up) • hole puncher • tape • post-its or message pad • small clipboard • receipt book • sticky-back blank labels • key ring with old keys • pens/pencils/markers • ink pad & stamp	• buy a can of playdough or make your own • garlic press • plastic knife • popstick sticks • wooden dowel • plastic lids • small tray/plate • buttons/beads • plastic animals

Resources

BOOKS

- Bronson, M. (1995). *The Right Stuff for Children Birth to 8: Selecting Play Materials to Support Development*. Washington, DC: NAEYC <www.naeyc.org>.
- Carlsson-Paige N. and Levin, D.E. (1990). *Who's Calling the Shots? How to Respond Effectively to Children's Fascination with War Play and War Toys*. Gabriola Island, BC, CAN: New Society <www.newsociety.com>.
- Levin, D. E. (1998). *Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture*. Washington, DC: NAEYC <www.naeyc.org>.
- Ready at Five Partnership. *Moving Young Children's Play Away from TV Violence and Bringing Parents Into the Picture*, available through Center for Media Literacy <www.medialit.org>.
- Walsh, D. (1995). *Selling Out America's Children*. Minneapolis: Fairview Press. Available through the National Institute on Media and the Family <www.mediaandthefamily.org>.

ORGANIZATIONS

- Center for a New American Dream*
6930 Carroll Ave, Ste. 900
Takoma Park, MD 20912 <www.newdream.org>
• Publishes booklet: "Tips for Parenting in a Commercial Culture"
- Commercial Alert*
1611 Connecticut Ave. N.W., Suite 3A
Washington, DC 20029
202-296-2787 <www.essential.org/alert>
• Helps parents defend against harmful marketing & commercialism.
- Lion and Lamb Project*
4300 Montgomery Ave., Suite 104
Bethesda, MD 20814 301-654-3091 <www.lionlamb.org>
• Promotes healthy play & non-violent toys. Publishes Parent Action Kits Violent Toy Trade-in Manual

TRUCE is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play and behavior of children in our classrooms.

TRUCE's goals are:

- To raise public awareness about the negative effects of violent and stereotyped toys and media on children, families, schools and society.
- To work to limit the harmful influence of unhealthy children's entertainment.
- To provide children with toys and activities that promote healthy play and non-violent behavior at home and school.
- To create a broad-based effort to eliminate marketing to children and to reduce the sale of toys of violence.
- To support parents' and teachers' efforts to deal with the issues regarding media.

For more information about what you can do and to make a contribution to cover our printing and disseminating costs, write: *TRUCE*, PO Box 441261, Somerville, MA 02144
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TRUCE is endorsed by: California AEYC Peace Committee; Cambridge Peace Commission; Cambridge-Somerville Child Care Alliance; Center for Children's Media; Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment; Lesley College Peaceable Schools Center; Lion & Lamb; New York; AEYC Anti-violence Committee; Television Project; TV-Free America; War Resisters' League.

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Teachers ***R***esisting ***U***nhealthy ***C***hildren's ***E***ntertainment

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*Teachers
Resisting
Unhealthy
Children's
Entertainment*

Media Violence and Children: A Call to Action!

2000 - 2001

Media is a powerful force in children's lives. Many children now spend more time in front of a screen than in school. Even when children are not in front of the screen, what they do and learn is highly influenced by the toys & related products marketed with TV shows and other media. The problem is made even worse because much of what children see on the screen is violent. It undermines lessons we teach at home and school about how people treat each other and encourages the use of violence to solve problems. Recent school shootings highlight the dangers of glamorizing the use of violence as a way to solve problems.

Media violence has become a public health issue that affects us all. Let us work together to reduce the problems created by media violence for our children and society.

*Teachers and parents, please join the TRUCE Campaign Against Media Violence.
Our Action Guide with help you to:*

- Promote children's informed and responsible use of media.
- Counteract the negative effects of media violence on children.
- Take action to reduce media violence in children's lives and in society.

Facts About Children, Media, and Violence

Research shows:

- Children average 35 hours per week of screen time-including TV, video games and videos.
- Heavy TV viewers are less imaginative, more aggressive, and have poorer concentration.
- Viewing media violence can make children more aggressive, fearful, disrespectful and insensitive to the effects of violence.
- The average child sees 8,000 murders and 100,000 other violence acts by the end of elementary school.
- Children's TV has 5 times as many acts of violent per hour as adults TV (26 vs. 5).
- A recent Harvard University study showed that G-rated movies average 9.5 minutes of violence.
- Most violent children's media is linked to toys and other products. The best selling new media-linked toy lines in 1999 were Star Wars and professional wrestling.
- A 1998 Gallup poll found 76% of parents believe the media has a negative influence on their children.

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ACTION GUIDE

- ♦ Talk with children about your concerns about media violence. To help you begin, here's a letter from teachers that you can read and talk about together.

Dear Kids,

A lot of kids really love to watch TV & videos. Many of the shows they watch have lots of fighting. The fighting often seems fun and exciting and like a great way to solve problems.

Many teachers are worried about the violence children see on TV. They say a lot of kids act out the fighting they saw when they play. Teachers also say they think TV fighting is making more kids use fighting in school to solve their conflicts with each other.

Kids often answer, "But we're only pretending. It isn't real. We're just playing." They say their pretend violence is different from real fighting.

But teachers say that when kids pretend to fight like TV characters, other kids often really get hurt. And sometimes kids seem surprised when this happens.

Some kids agree they're surprised when someone gets hurt. They say they're the good guys & good guys have to fight bad guys, that's why they fight.

Teachers see that a lot of little kids look up to good guy TV characters and want to do what they do. So the teachers think violent TV shows can teach kids that it's okay to fight and hurt people.

Because teachers are worried about TV violence and kids are getting hurt, teachers want to help grown-ups & children talk together about it and decide what to do so everyone stays safe.

- WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT WHAT TEACHERS ARE SAYING?
- WHAT DO YOU THINK GROWN-UPS SHOULD DO ABOUT VIOLENCE ON TV & VIDEOS?
- WHAT CAN GROWN-UPS DO TO HELP CHILDREN BE SAFE & LEARN NOT TO FIGHT?
- WHAT CAN YOU AND OTHER CHILDREN DO?

Thanks a lot for listening to and talking about our letter.
From Many Teachers All Over the Country



ACTION GUIDE

- ◆ Help children develop thoughtful and responsible media viewing habits.
 - Decide together how much "screen time" is okay each day or week. (With young children, we recommend starting with the least amount that can work with your schedule and your child's.)
 - Discuss and work out which shows are okay and which are not.
 - Make a chart (with simple picture illustrations for non-readers) of shows which your children want to watch and which you can agree are good choices. Check the chart regularly to help you discuss how things are going.
- ◆ Talk with other parents about how they deal with TV.
 - Share your concerns and approach to TV and other media. Use this TRUCE guide.
 - Discuss how you will deal with TV and other media when your children are at each other's houses.
 - Ask your child's school to help promote such discussions.
- ◆ Limit the effects media violence has on your child by trying to limit the number of highly realistic toys and other products that are linked to TV programs.
 - Encourage creative and imaginative play rather than play that mainly imitates what children see on TV.
 - Provide toys that children can use in many ways over a long period of time, such as blocks, playdough, dress-ups, and props for dramatic play (e.g., old telephones).
- ◆ Choose toys carefully. (Use the following guide and the TRUCE Toy Action Guide to help you with your toy choices.)

Toy Selection Guide

Look for toys that:

- ◆ Can be used in a variety of ways.
- ◆ Promote creativity and problem solving by letting children decide what to do.
- ◆ Can be enjoyed at different ages and stages and grow with the child.
- ◆ Will continue to be fun and engaging over time.
- ◆ Can be used with other toys for changing and more complex play.
- ◆ Promote respectful, non-stereotyped, non-violent interactions among children.
- ◆ Will add a new dimension to play beyond a child's current toys.

Some examples:

- table blocks • ocean, farm, and rainforest animals or insects • construction sets (Legos, Lincoln Logs, etc.) • people and animal props • tool sets • flashlights • dolls with accurate features • clay • basic art supplies • blocks • cars, trucks, boats, planes and trains • dress-up clothes and house-wares • bean bags • balls • jump ropes • playing cards • puzzles • tape stories • medical kits • musical instruments •

For more information write: TRUCE PO Box 441261, West Somerville, MA 02144

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ACTION GUIDE

- ◆ Fill in the local phone numbers of TV networks, government officials and toy manufacturers and put this list by your phone so you can voice your opinions easily and often.

KEY ADDRESSES & PHONE NUMBERS TO HELP YOU TAKE ACTION

National TV Networks

ABC Entertainment

2040 Avenue of the Stars
Century City, CA 90067
(318) 566-1401 www.ABC.com
Local affiliate # _____

CBS Audience Services

51 W 52nd St.
New York, NY 10019
(212) 975-4321 www.CBS.com
Local # _____

Discovery Channel

7700 Wisconsin Ave., Ste. 700
Bethesda, MD 20814
(301) 986-0444 www.discovery.com
Local # _____

Disney Channel

3800 West Alameda Ave.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 569-7897 www.disney.go.com
Local # _____

Fox Broadcast Studios

P.O. Box 900
Beverly Hills, CA 90213
(310) 277-2211 www.fox.com
Local # _____

NBC Entertainment President

30 Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10020
(212) 664-4444 www.NBC.com
Local # _____

Nickelodeon

1515 Broadway
New York, NY 10036
(212) 258-7579 www.nick.com
Local # _____

PBS

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 223124
(703) 739-5000 www.pbs.com
Local # _____

TNT, CNN /Turner Broadcasting

1050 Techwood Drive NW
Atlanta, GA 30318
(404) 885-4538 www.turner.com
Local # _____
(owns World Championship Wrestling)

Government Officials

FCC (Regulates TV)
Mass Media Complaints
Chief of Complaints
1919 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20554
(202) 418-1430 www.fcc.gov

President of the United States

The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC
(202) 456-1414
email: president@whitehouse.gov

US Senator _____
Phone # _____

US Senator _____
Phone # _____

US Rep. _____
Phone # _____

Governor _____
Phone # _____

Toy Manufacturers & Retailers

Bandai America, Inc.

12851 E. 166th St.
Cerritos, CA 90701
(310) 926-0947 www.bandai.com
Products: Power Rangers & Sailor Moon

Hasbro Toy Group

1027 Newport Ave.
Pawtucket, RI 02862
(401) 431-8697 www.hasbro.com
Also: Lewis Galoob and Milton Bradley
Products: Batman, GI Joe, Godzilla,
Mortal Kombat, Play-Doh, Star Wars,
Transformers.

Jakks Pacific, Inc.

22761 PCH. Suite 226
Malibu, CA 90265
(310) 456-7799 www.jakkspecific.com
Product: World Wrestling Federation toys

KayBee Toys

100 West St.
Pittsfield, MA 01201
(413) 496-3000 www.kbkids.com
Largest mall-based toy store chain

Mattel Toys

333 Continental Blvd.
El Segundo, CA 90245
(310) 524-2000 www.mattel.com
Products: Barbie, Hot Wheels,
Pocahontas

McFarlane Toys (Irwin)

11918 Farmington Road
Livonia, MI 48150
(313) 425-0340
Product: Spawn action figures

Nintendo of America

PO Box 957
Redmond, VA 98073
(800) 255-3700 www.nintendo.com

Saban Entertainment

400 W. Alameda Ave.
Burbank, CA 91505
(818) 972-4800 www.sabin.com
Product: Power Rangers

Sega Enterprises

255 Shoreline Drive
Redwood City, CA 94065
(414) 508-2800 www.sega.com

Sony Computer Entertainment America

919 E. Hillsdale Blvd., 2nd Floor
Foster City, CA 94404
www.playstation.com

Toys R Us

461 From Road
Paramus, NJ 07652
(201) 262-7800 www.toysrus.com



ACTION GUIDE

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Books:

- American Medical Association. (1996). *Physician Guide to Media Violence*. Chicago
- Cantor, J. (1998). *"Mommy, I'm Scared" How TV and Movies Frighten Children and What We Can Do to Protect Them*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace
- Carlsson-Paige, N. & Levin, D. (1990). *Who's Calling the Shots? How to Respond Effectively to Children's Fascination with War Play, War Toys and Violent TV*. Philadelphia: New Society.
- Coco, L. (1996). *Children First: A Parents' Guide to Fighting Corporate Predators*. Corporate Accountability Research Group - PO Box 19312, Washington, DC 20036
- DeGaetano, G. & Bander, K. (1996). *Screen smarts: Raising media literate kids*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Garbarino, J. (1995). *Raising Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Grossman, D. & DeGaetano, G. (1999). *Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill: A Call to Action Against TV, Movie and Video Game Violence*. New York: Crown.
- Huston, A. (1992). *Big World, Small Screen: The Role of Television in American Society*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.
- Levin, D. (1998). *Remote Control Childhood? Combating the Hazards of Media Culture*. Washington, DC: NAEYC.
- Levin, D. (1994). *Teaching Young Children in Violent Times: Building a Peaceable Classroom*. Cambridge: Educators for Social Responsibility.
- Levin, D. & Carlsson-Paige, N. (September, 1995). The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers: Teachers voice concern. *Young Children*.
- Levin, D., Gerzon, C. & TRUCE. *Help Children See Through Violence and the Media*. For free copy write: Mass. Violence Prevention Task Force, Dept. of Public Health, 250 Washington St., Boston, MA 02108.
- Levine, M. (1996). *Viewing Violence: How Media Violence Affects Your Child's and Adolescent's Development*. New York: Doubleday
- Walsh, D. (1994). *Selling out America's Children: How America Puts Profits Before Values—and What Parents Can Do*. Minneapolis: Fairview Press.

Organizations:

Center for Media Education

2120 L St. N.W., Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037
202-331-7833 www.cme.org
• Promotes public policies for responsible children's TV and other media.

Center for Media Literacy

4727 Wilshire Blvd., Ste. 403
Los Angeles, CA 90010
213-913-4177 www.medialit.org
• Media literacy materials including the acclaimed media literacy curriculum, *Beyond Blame*

Children Now

1212 Broadway, Suite 530
Oakland, CA 94612
510-763-2444 www.childrennow.org
• Reports and materials on media & children.
Advocacy and organizing on media issues

Coalition for Quality Children's Video

535 Cordova Rd., Suite 456
Santa Fe, NM 87501
505-989-8076 www.eqcm.org/kidsfirst
• *Kids First* Newsletter rates children's videos;
other helpful video resources

Commercial Alert

1611 Ct. Ave. N.W., Suite 3A
Washington, DC 20029
202-296-2787 www.essential.org/alert
• Helping parents defend against harmful marketing and commercialism.

Lion and Lamb Project

4300 Montgomery Ave., Suite 104
Bethesda, MD 20814
301-654-3091 www.lionlamb.org
• Supports family & community efforts to promote healthy play & nonviolent toys.

Media Education Foundation

26 Center Street
Northampton, MA 01060
800-659-6882 www.mediaed.org
• Best producers of media literacy video materials for education purposes.

Media Scope

12711 Ventura Blvd.
Studio City, CA 01694
818-508-2080 www.igc.apc.org/mediascope
• Clearinghouse for media violence materials; research and advocacy

Nat'l Alliance for Non-violent Programming

1864 Banking Street
Greensboro, NC
910-370-0407
• Materials to help communities organize against violent programming

Nat'l Institute on Media & the Family

2450 Riverside Ave.
Minneapolis, MN 55454
888-672-KIDS www.mediaandfamily.org
• Newsletter rating media products' impact on children; distributes video on making good media choices

TV-Free America

1322 18th St., NW, Ste. 300
Washington, DC 20036
202-887-0436 www.tvfa.org
• Materials to organize annual TV turn-off week in your community

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ACTION GUIDE

- ♦ Work together to reduce violence in the media and to create an environment more conducive to children's healthy development.
 - Phone or write letters to TV stations, movie companies, toy manufacturers & local newspapers to voice your concerns. Urge other adults to do so too. Here's a letter that can serve as a guide (see "Key Addresses & Phone Numbers"):

Sample Letter to Broadcasters/Toy Producers/etc.

Dear _____ [TV Broadcasters/Toy Company President/Toy Store Manager]:

I recently _____ [watched an episode of/shopped at]. I found _____ [this program/toy] harmful to children because of the lessons it teaches about violence.

As an _____ [educator/parent], I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence in our country and the role [your program/product] may play in promoting it. I will tell at least ten others about my concerns with _____ [your program/product] and urge them to protect their children from it.

I hope you share my concerns about violence and children. I urge you to play your role in helping to reduce the epidemic of violence in homes, schools, and communities by refusing to sell toys of violence.

Sincerely,

- Help children voice their concerns too.

Sample Letter for Children to Voice their Ideas about Media Violence

Dear _____ [Company's Name]:

I have been learning about _____ [TV/toys] that are good and bad for children _____ [at home/school]. I am writing to you to talk about _____ [show/toy]. I think it is _____ [good/bad] for children because _____

I hope you will listen to kids and _____ [keep having shows like this one/replace the violence with shows that are healthy for children/make toys that help children play without violence].

Sincerely,

_____ [your name], ____ years old

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ACTION GUIDE

- ♦ Talk with children about what they see on the screen.

Questions to Help Parents and Children Talk Together About TV and Other Media *

One effective way to influence the messages that children learn from the media is talking to them about what they see. Aim for a give-and-take discussion rather than a lecture where you give the answers. Through an open discussion you can find out children's ideas, fears, misconceptions and provide other ideas.

- You can each talk about your reactions (both positive and negative) to what you saw.
 - *What did you think about that show / game?*
 - *Did you like it when _____ happened? Why do you think it happened?*
 - *I didn't like it when _____. I wish they didn't have to hurt each other. What do you think?*
- You can help sort out fantasy from reality.
 - *What was pretend and what was real? How could you tell?*
 - *Help clarify confusion by saying things such as, "In real life things don't work that way."*
 - *I wonder how they made _____ happen on that show.*
 - *How can we tell the difference between these ads and the show wonder why they made the ad like that?*
- You can help compare what they saw to their own experience.
 - *Could anything like _____ happen to you? When? How could it be the same / different?*
 - *What would you do if you were in that situation?*
- You can talk directly about the violence and other mean-spirited behavior that children see on the screen.
 - *What do you think about how _____ solved their problem? If you had a problem like that what could you do / say?*
 - *Can you think of a way to solve that problem where no one gets hurt?*
- You can ask questions that focus on stereotyped images and behaviors.
 - *I wonder why it's always men with big muscles who go to fight? Did you notice that? What do you think about it?*
 - *It seems like the women always need to get rescued by the men. Have you noticed that? I wonder why?*
 - *I wonder why the "bad guys" have foreign accents? always wear dark colors? have darker skin?*

* adapted from *Remote-Control Childhood* by Diane Levin

TRUCE is a national group of educators deeply concerned about how children's entertainment and toys are affecting the play and behavior of children in our classrooms.

TRUCE's goals are:

- ✦ To raise public awareness about the negative effects of violent and stereotyped toys and media on children, families, schools and society.
- ✦ To work to limit the harmful influence of unhealthy children's entertainment.
- ✦ To provide children with toys and activities that promote healthy play and non-violent behavior at home and school.
- ✦ To create a broad-based effort to eliminate marketing to children and to reduce the sale of toys of violence.
- ✦ To support parents' and teachers' efforts to deal with the issues regarding media.

For more information about what you can do and to make a contribution to cover our printing and disseminating costs, write: *TRUCE*, PO Box 441261, Somerville, MA 02144
www.wheelock.edu/truce; e-mail: truce teachers@aol.com

TRUCE is endorsed by: California AEYC Peace Committee; Cambridge Peace Commission; Cambridge-Somerville Child Care Alliance; Center for Children's Media; Concerned Educators Allied for a Safe Environment; Lesley College Peaceable Schools Center; Lion & Lamb; New York AEYC Anti-violence Committee; Television Project; TV-Free America; War Resisters' League.

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Teachers Resisting Unhealthy Children's Entertainment

PO Box 441261
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